

**THE EOSINOPHIL.** By P. B. Beeson and D. A. Bass (Pp. xii+269; figs 26 £10.50). Philadelphia, London and Toronto: W. B. Saunders, 1977.

IT used to be that people interested in cellular aspects of immunology thought only of lymphocytes - the other cells were just there for fun. The macrophage was then considered to be worthy of serious attention with the result that it has enjoyed a dramatic rise in status. The eosinophil is now getting the same treatment with, it is to be hoped, the same result.

The literature on the eosinophil is vast. In the preface to this book the authors refer to a review published in 1914 which cited almost 3,000 references. That this and much subsequent work has contributed so little to our understanding of the eosinophil is largely due to the fact that techniques available to study haematogenous cells were inappropriate to the fundamental problems of their origins and functions. The best way to study cell function is to use methods which measure functions - methods which study structure and distribution of highly mobile cell populations in histological 'stills' cannot by their very nature get into these problems in any depth. Since the 1960's many such methods have been developed and much of the rapid expansion of knowledge in immunology and haematology has been due to their application. The authors of this book have been chosen to emphasize these aspects of their subject.

The chief virtues of the book are its brevity and its honesty. The authors do not attempt to cover up ignorance with either a smoke-screen of speculation or an ill-digested catalogue of observations. The book is set out in five sections dealing with structure and behaviour, changes in numbers, participation in phenomena of immunity, hormonal influences, and clinical observations. The chapters are concise and well referenced (not just to the most recent literature) and they highlight not only areas of progress but also areas of ignorance.

The book is printed clearly, the subject matter well set out and it has an adequate index. The black-and-white photographs are not brilliantly clear but suffice for their purpose. It is probably not a book that many individual doctors would wish to purchase but as a point of reference it should be useful to those in both laboratory and clinical medicine whose problems occasionally bring them face-to-face with the eosinophil.

*T.A.McN.*

**ENCYCLOPEDIA AND DICTIONARY OF MEDICINE, NURSING AND ALLIED HEALTH.** By B. F. Miller and Claire B. Keene. (Pp. xxiii+1148; figs. 139 and 16 colour plates. Indexed version £11.25, Plain £9.25). Philadelphia, London and Toronto: Saunders and Eastbourne: Holt-Saunders, 1978.

PERHAPS the best way of assessing the usefulness of a combined encyclopaedia and dictionary is to have it on one's desk and refer to it regularly for a few weeks. Based on this approach this volume proved helpful, wide-ranging and comprehensive. It is up-to-date and there are useful appendices which provide factual information on a number of subjects such as desirable weights, table of weights and measures and laboratory reference values of clinical importance. The latter subject covers both conventional units and S.I. units, together with the conversion factors necessary to change one system to the other. Anyone possessing this volume will have an enormous amount of factual information readily available and provided that care is taken over the transatlantic spelling it should prove an acceptable support for secretarial staff. It is warmly recommended.

*D.A.D.M.*